

## **Guidelines and Correspondence for Setting Up Environment Rating Scale Training and Certification**

In order to ensure the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) training and certification runs smoothly, the following is basic information about the responsibilities of the sponsoring agency.

### **Field Observation Sites**

1. The purpose of the field observation is to allow a small group of trainees practice using a scale in a real situation under the guidance of a trained, reliable State Master Anchor, Local Anchor, or ERSI author, serving as the group leader.
2. The number of trainees in each small group differs by scale:
  - Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales-Revised is limited to 3 to 4 trainees.
  - Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised is limited to 2 to 3 trainees.
  - Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised is limited to 2 to 3 trainees.

If larger group size is necessary, please secure larger classrooms or family child care homes (FCCHs).

3. The same small group stays with its assigned group leader for all the observations
4. Arrange enough observation sites so each small group can go to a different site each day without repeating any classroom or FCCH. Observation sites can be used multiple times during the observation period, but no small group can return to the same classroom or FCCH they have already observed. Please arrange back-up observation sites in case a site cancels at the last moment. This is especially important with FCCHs. While an alternative classroom in a center may be substituted if a classroom is unavailable on the observation day, a totally different site must be used in case of a last minute cancellation of a FCCH.
5. Select classrooms that provide a variety of experiences. Please choose classrooms in different neighborhoods, funding streams, and quality, if known.
6. Tell the director or contact person at the site the observation will last 3 hours (usually 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.). Ask the director/FCC owner when the classroom begins its preschool day and confirm the start time. Arrive at least 15 minutes early to introduce yourselves to the director and ask baseline questions.

7. Ask the director/FCC owner to explain to teachers the purpose of the observation is to train new assessors, not for evaluating their classroom. Explain the practice observation is not used for rating because:
  - The Parents and Staff subscale is not included in practice observations.
  - There are more adults in the classroom than usual so it is not a typical situation, invalidating the results.
  - Questions typically asked of the teachers will be asked of the group leader as part of the scoring experience.
8. Please contact the observation site again a few days before the scheduled observation day to remind them when the observers are coming and to make sure they will be present.

### **Debriefing Site**

Following each field practice observation, the small groups will debrief. The debriefing process requires each trainee to score items independently, discuss each item scored with others in their group and the group leader, and reach consensus on the correct scores. Each small group will need a quiet, private, conveniently located place with a table to spread out books, papers, and other materials. Each group will need a place to debrief each day from approximately 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. The debriefing site should be away from the observation site, in a location where sensitive information can be discussed confidentially.

## Sample Letter/E-mail to Lead County Contact

Dear [County Lead ERS Contact]:

I look forward to joining [two or three] participants in your county from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (dates) for a [two-day Inter-Rater Reliability Check; four-day Anchor Recertification; or five-day Initial Anchor Certification] on the [ECERS-R; ITERS-R; or FCCERS-R] tool.

### Participant Information

Please provide me with each participant's name, e-mail address, and telephone number by (insert date) so I am able to communicate with each person directly. In addition, please review and forward to each participant the attached Environment Rating Scales (ERS) Certification Information and Checklist containing details about what to expect. Each participant must return their signed checklist to me by (insert date) indicating they are aware of the circumstances of the observation and will complete the activities on the checklist prior to my scheduled visit.

### Site and Classroom Information

In order to ensure reliability testing is conducted to fidelity, please schedule visits to appropriate age-group centers or family child care homes using the following guidelines:

- Schedule four classrooms plus one back-up classroom for each five-day certification.
- Back-up classrooms are necessary if, for any reason, a site must cancel due to teacher illness or other unforeseen circumstance.
- No more than two classrooms in the same facility may be used during certification.
- Schedule classrooms in different types of sites, if possible (e.g., Head Start, State Preschool, private).
- Provide site addresses, classroom information, and contact name to me one week before the first site visit.
- Scores obtained during reliability testing may not be used for Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge ratings, as teacher interview questions are not asked of classroom teachers and the complete tool is not used (Parents and Staff/Provider subscale is not scored).
- A location to reconvene in order to complete scoring then discuss individual codes to determine reliability should be identified.

Participants will be certified as a Level 1 Assessor (eligible to be a Local Anchor) if they reach an average of 90 percent reliability over three consecutive observations. Participants obtaining an average of 85 to 89 percent reliability will be certified as a Level 2 Assessor.

If you have any questions or concerns about the upcoming reliability testing, please contact your MA at 916-263- [\[1051, 1152, or 1154\]](#).

Thank you,

Training & Continuous Quality Improvement Team  
First 5 California  
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Sacramento, CA 95833  
Email: [Training&CQI@ccfc.ca.gov](mailto:Training&CQI@ccfc.ca.gov)  
Fax: 916-263-1360

## Sample Letter/E-mail to Participants

Dear [ERS Participant]:

I am excited about your upcoming [two-day Inter-Rater Reliability Check; four-day Anchor Recertification; or five-day Initial Anchor Certification] on the [ECERS-R; ITERS-R; or FCCERS-R] tool which is scheduled in your county from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (dates).

### **Please confirm the accuracy of your information:**

Name: (insert information)

E-mail Address: (insert information)

Telephone Number: (information)

You should have received a copy of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) Certification Information and Checklist from your county Environment Rating Scale (ERS) contact and I hope you found it helpful. If you have not already done so, please return your signed checklist to me by [date]. It is important you return the checklist as it contains details about what to expect during your reliability testing. It also verifies you are aware of the circumstances of the observation and will complete the activities on the checklist prior to my scheduled visit.

It is important for all participants to do their part to make this training successful and help you reach reliability. Please make sure you fully prepare for the certification by completing **all** pre-visit requirements. Please note that I will be available to assist you with your preparation.

In addition to preparing for your observation, please keep in mind it is important we respect the need for programs to continue to operate effectively and the rights of the children and adults in the program. The following guidelines are designed to make our presence a pleasant experience for those being observed, as well as maximize your opportunity to reach reliability.

### **Be a polite visitor**

- Arrive at the designated location(s) 10 minutes before the planned observation start time to confer with the trainer and site administration.
- Introduce yourself to the site supervisor and the staff. Reiterate the purpose of your visit.
- Wear a nametag so everyone knows who you are.
- Turn off your cell phone.
- Refrain from talking with other observers during the observation.

- Try to keep a neutral facial expression so that children and/or staff are neither drawn to you nor concerned about your response to them.
- Be prepared with the necessary materials (rating scale booklet, score sheets, extra pencils, tape measure, etc.).
- Wash your hands or use sanitizer upon entering the classroom and when re-entering from outdoors.

### **Respect privacy**

- Please keep everything you see or hear confidential. Do not repeat anything about the staff, children, or facility that you become aware of as part of this session.
- Keep track of your observation materials at all times. Do not put things down and walk away from them at any time.
- You may observe only in the areas assigned to your group. When in doubt, please ask your Master Anchor. Please stay with your group and leave together.

### **Affect the environment as little as possible**

- Teachers/providers will be involved with the children during your visit. Do not ask questions or talk with teachers during your observation. Take notes on a pad and/or on your scoresheet to help in scoring.
- You may acknowledge children if they approach you. If they ask, you can tell them that you are watching them play today, or that you have to finish your work. Do not otherwise take part in their activities.
- Observers should not interfere with ongoing activities in any way. Station yourself around the perimeter of the room, as unobtrusively as possible. You should move around periodically to get a better vantage point during the observation.
- Please move if you are in the way of adults or children. Remain sensitive to what is happening around you.
- If it does not interfere with the ongoing program, you may sit in a chair or on the floor. Please do not sit on other furniture, such as shelves, tables, the children's chairs near an activity table, or on play equipment.
- You may look at materials that are in plain view on open shelves if you can do so without disturbing the group. However, a close inspection of these materials is best done when the children are out of or in another part of the room.
- Ask the teacher's/provider's permission before looking through drawers, in cabinets, or in other closed spaces. If permitted, you may take a few minutes to look in storage spaces used for child care materials while children are outside.
- Do not leave tote bags or purses within reach of children. It is best to not take them into the classroom.

Participants will be certified as a Level 1 Assessor (eligible to be a Local Anchor, as determined by your consortium) if they reach an average of 90 percent reliability over three consecutive assessments. Participants obtaining an average of 85 to 89 percent reliability will be certified as a Level 2 Assessor.

Participants should attempt to score as much as possible during the observation. However, it is expected additional time is needed to complete scoring outside the classroom. Therefore, we will reconvene following the observation at a designated location to complete the independent scoring and then discuss individual codes to determine reliability. Please note, during reliability certification:

- The Parents and Staff/Parents and Provider subscale is not scored.
- Participants will ask interview questions of the First 5 California Master Anchor, who will play the role of classroom teacher/provider.
- Scores are not considered valid for rating purposes.

You should receive a list of observation sites, classrooms, and addresses from your county's ERS contact several days before the first observation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the upcoming reliability testing, please contact one of the F5CA MAs at 916-263- [\[1051, 1152, or 1154\]](#).

Thank you,

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## Sample Letter/E-mail to Sites

E-mail subject line: Environment Rating Scale Site Visit to [Name of the site-month, date, year]

Dear [name of the site director/contact]:

Thank you for opening (Name of site) as a field observation site for [ERS tool] trainees on [month, date, year]. The purpose of these observations is to allow a small group of trainees to practice using the [ERS tool] in real situations under the guidance of a trained and reliable field supervisor serving as the group leader. The results will not be used for program evaluation and will not be shared with others.

The observations will last approximately three hours and will be conducted between 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The team members visiting your center are [insert names of the Master Anchor and trainees]. They will arrive by 8:15 a.m. and will check in at the office. Please consider informing your families there will be additional people in your center on [month and date].

I will call you on [day before the observation] to answer any last minute questions. Please call or e-mail me if you no longer are able to accommodate visitors on [month and date] or need other information.

Sincerely,

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